

represented, however, a period of wide fluctuations. The salient fact upon which the advocates of resumption at the current value of the rouble rested their case was that since 1891⁴ * the rouble had acquired a stability more and more marked and a fixity of value which was a benefit both to the country itself and to those who were called upon to do business with it" ^x In the language of a semi-official publication²:

In fine, the credit rouble is equal to a fixed quantity of fine gold, almost identical with the amount which one has been able, on the average of the last twenty years and during the last three years, to procure with this same rouble. The fixed exchange at which the Bank of Russia buys and sells gold over its counter causes 110 disturbance to contracts, old or recent, formal or tacit; it does not modify established customs, the price of rents, the nominal or the real amount of wages. Mortgage creditors and debtors, holders of the public funds issued in credit roubles, functionaries and employees, and all others, give and receive paper roubles at par, and these roubles are worth to-day that which, on the average, they were worth from 1876 to 1895, from 1879 to 1881, from 1893 to 1896.

Already, as early as 1887, Vichnegradsky, the great finance minister who paved the way for the later successes of Count Witte, had declared that the eventual rate of conversion for the paper rouble would be two-thirds of its nominal value and had planned to strengthen exchange funds and end the regime of irredeemable paper.³ By the autumn of 1892 Count Witte was preparing to bring to an end speculation in the paper rouble in the Berlin market. He gave notice in January, 1893,^{to} banking institutions doing business in Russia that aid lent by them to speculative operations in the rouble would be considered as incompatible with their privileges. In the autumn of the next year, when the comparative stability of the paper had been disturbed temporarily by unfavorable reports regarding the health of the Russian Emperor, Count Witte went resolutely into the market, purchased the "short"⁷ contracts offered by speculators for the

¹ Raffalovich, *Les Methodes pour Revenir & la Bonne Monnaie*, 20. ⁹ *Bulletin Russe de Statistique*, March-April, 1896, III., 177. ³ Lorini, 118.